



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

POLITICS AS A BARRIER TO AN ADEQUATE AND EFFICIENT SYSTEM OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

BY GEORGE HAVEN PUTNAM.¹

Under the policy maintained by the United States from the beginning of its history, the control of the military and naval resources of the nation has been left with the civil authorities. It is the theory of American government that the decision as to national policy and as to action under such policy, and the general direction of the military and naval forces maintained for the defense of the nation, or for the carrying out of national policy, must rest with the officials selected by the people for the government of the country.

The President who, notwithstanding the form of the electoral college, represents the political choice of the voters of the country, is himself the commander-in-chief of the army and of the navy. The secretary of war and the secretary of the navy, nearly always civilians, serving as members of the Cabinet, are selected by the President and are subject to confirmation by another civil authority, the United States Senate. The amount of the expenditure that is to be incurred from year to year for the maintenance of the army and of the navy, and for constructive work for new forts or for additional vessels, is fixed, in the first place, by a committee in the House of Representatives, whose action is confirmed by the vote of the Senate. The committees fixing these appropriations, through which are determined the effective force of the army and navy, have before them the recommendations of the President, the secretary of war, and the secretary of the navy, and these recommendations are based upon, or are assumed to be based upon, the reports and recommendations submitted by the army boards and navy boards, composed of trained and experienced officers who have been charged with the duty of investigating conditions and of putting into shape the plans for the effective maintenance and development of the army and navy.

¹The limitations of the space in *The Annals* rendered necessary the omission of certain portions of Mr. Putnam's paper. These omissions are indicated by asterisks.

In no country in the world is the civilian control of army and navy so complete as in the United States, although there is in Great Britain an approximation to the American system. There are but few Americans who would be prepared at this time to raise question concerning the wisdom of this civilian control over the fighting resources of the nation. We recognize that under a system such as has been developed in Germany, where the organization of army and navy is determined by military and naval staffs, acting under the direction of the Emperor, himself a trained soldier, it is possible to secure a very much larger measure of fighting efficiency than can be looked for under our system. It had been known in advance of the present war that under the German system, with the direct Imperial control, and through the organization of efficient staffs by which should be determined the details of organization, the mapping out of the territory of the Empire into army departments and smaller regions controlled by division organizations, a much larger return in the form of fighting efficiency could be secured in proportion to the expenditure required than could ever be looked for under either the American or the English methods, in which Congress or Parliament insists upon retaining in its own hands the authority and the control.

The American citizen, like the Englishman, has been willing to sacrifice fighting efficiency for the sake of the certainty of retaining his citizen's control over national action. Under the conditions obtaining in the twentieth century, Americans must, however, recognize that the United States has reached a point where its fighting efficiency and the organization of the resources back of its fighting force, must be brought into comparison, and possibly in the near future into conflict, with the systems and the organizations of other nations. It becomes necessary, therefore, for us to consider how far it may be practicable without too serious a sacrifice of American theories of representative government, and of citizens' control of the action of such government, to develop an improvement of the methods of organization and of expenditure that have during the past years been accepted or endured.

Americans have the reputation of being a business-like people and of applying common sense and a fair order of intelligence to the management of their undertakings. There may well, therefore, be a feeling of annoyance, if not of mortification, and even of

concern for the future, when we are reminded from time to time that we incur an enormous expenditure for a very small measure of efficiency for fighting, or even for defense. * * * *

As far back as Revolutionary days, before the shaping of the Constitution had determined the method of control of the national forces, Washington complained through the long seven years of the Revolution, of the lack of intelligence shown by the Congressional committees to whom had been entrusted, or who had assumed for themselves, the direction of army business which they did not understand. Their blunders were made sometimes through undue interference and sometimes through shameful and heedless neglect, and these blunders brought upon the Continental troops a long series of unnecessary burdens and hardships, and undoubtedly lengthened the struggle for independence. The American reading the history of the Revolution feels that the Colonies would have been wiser to have adopted the system pursued in an emergency by republican Rome. If Washington had been made dictator, his task would have been easier and the country would have been better served. The twentieth century, however, or at least the twentieth century American, has no use for dictators, and we have got to do the best that we can with our citizens' control. But this control should at least be made intelligent and ignorant interference should be minimized. The history of the army posts and of the navy yards gives telling examples of the bad effect of civilian authority in regard to matters and details maintained against the opinions of the experts. We have at this time in existence forty-nine army posts—some eight or ten have during the past twenty-five years been abolished, but almost as many more have been added. The larger number of these posts were created a century or three-quarters of a century back for the very legitimate purpose of protecting the frontiers against Indian raids. The necessity for such protection has long since passed. The Indians are now quiet citizens, or have gone where good and bad Indians go. Successive secretaries of the army have given lists of army posts which ought to be abolished, and the abandonment of which would save moneys that could be used to advantage for the development of the army strength. These useless posts have been retained purely because the communities in which they are placed find some profit from the expenditure connected with them; and because the Congress-

man who voted for their abolition would incur unpopularity with his constituents. The vote of no one Congressman would be sufficient for the maintenance of the useless expenditure, but his vote, coupled with that of hundreds of other Congressmen who are interested on behalf of their own districts in maintaining other futile expenditures, has been sufficient from decade to decade to preserve these useless posts.

In 1912, Henry L. Stimson, secretary of war under President Taft, rendered an annual report of the War Department, which, as a repertory of important information, incisive analysis and clear-cut and weighty recommendations, will retain authority for years to come. It can be compared with the famous report on taxation printed some forty years ago by David A. Wells for the information and financial guidance of the state of New York. In this report, Mr. Stimson gives a list of the forty-nine army posts at that time in existence. He points out, in line with the recommendation of several of his predecessors, that forty or forty-one of these posts ought to be abandoned. This change is important, in his view, not only for the purpose of concentrating the scattered forces of the little army, so that these can be organized in proper divisions, and that officers and men can have the advantage of division service and training, but also to avoid wasteful expenditure. Mr. Stimson estimates that not less than \$5,500,000 could be saved annually by the closing of the useless posts. He shows also various ways in which this money could be used for the service of the nation by improving the efficiency of the army. Similar recommendations have been made by successive secretaries of the navy for the abolition of useless navy yards. The number of the navy yards now carried on the navy list is twenty-one. The experts have recommended that this number should be reduced to twelve or fifteen. Here also a substantial saving could be secured. When the two secretaries of war and the army and navy boards are criticized for incurring large expenditure with small results, it should be borne in mind that certain important divisions of this expenditure are placed outside of their control.

I may recall another instance in which political influence caused unnecessary expenditure and very seriously interfered with the fighting efficiency of our troops. The armies of our Civil War, outside of the little nucleus of the regular army, were organized as

United States volunteers. Our regiments were mustered into the service of the United States, and the armies were directed by United States officers. The regiments were, however, under the plan pursued, organized as state regiments. Some of the states attempted for a time methods which proved to be unprofitable and exceedingly unsatisfactory, under which the company officers were elected by the men, and the field officers were, later, elected by the company officers. But by the close of the first year of the war, there was, I believe, a substantially uniform system in all of the states of the North under which the regimental officers, company and staff, received their commissions from the state governors. The vacancies caused by death or resignation were filled up under the authority of the state governors. In theory at least, the new commissions for the companies were supposed to be given under the recommendation of the regimental officers, and for the regiments by the brigade commanders who had direct knowledge of the service rendered by the regiment. In fact, these vacancies were very largely filled with new men coming from civil life without training, who were appointed over the heads of the officers in the front who had volunteered for service early in the war, and whose service had secured for them a valuable training. These political appointments to fill vacancies did much to demoralize the effectiveness of the regiments at the front. A still greater evil, however, that is to say a more serious impairment of the fighting force of our Northern volunteers, was brought about by the decision to use the later recruits, in the first place volunteers and after 1863, the conscripts, to make new regiments instead of filling up the depleted ranks of the regiments at the front. The state of New York mustered into service during the four years of the war, one hundred and ninety regiments. There ought to have been kept in organization not to exceed one hundred regiments, and if the later recruits, volunteers, and drafted men had been used to keep the ranks of those regiments filled up, the effective fighting force of our army would have been enormously increased. New men campaigning and fighting shoulder to shoulder with veterans secure training very much more rapidly than is possible in a regiment which is green from drummer boy to colonel. These green regiments began wrong. They were a weakness to any brigade with which they were associated. The Confederates had the common sense to pursue the

sensible system. They used their later drafts of men for filling up the depleted commands. Their regiments were kept as nearly as possible to the fighting strength and their brigade divisions and corps contained in most cases nearly double the force of our own. At the Battle of Gettysburg, for instance, the men engaged on the field were, taking the average of the three days, very nearly equal in number: but the Confederates had three army corps engaged against six corps of Federals.

The recommendation of Secretary Stimson, based upon the reports of successive army boards, provides for concentrating the army of the United States into a small number of departments. He recommends a small group of posts covering the Atlantic seaboard on a line from the St. Lawrence to Atlanta; a similar series of posts on the Pacific coast on a line between Puget Sound and Los Angeles, and two groups between the Great Lakes and the Mexican border. The coast forts now number about eighty, of which thirty-nine have no garrisons and the others have garrisons averaging one-half the proper complement. The local sentiment, however, reflected by the action of the members of the House of Representatives, is strictly opposed to any lessening either of the posts or of the coast forts. This objection is, as said above, based in part upon the desire to retain for the districts the advantage of the annual expenditure; but it is fair to say that it is also based in part upon state pride. This local feeling on the part of our forty-eight states, or even of the Congressional districts, in retaining for their own territories something of the national property—some expression of the national power, is not unnatural, and in its general spirit is not to be condemned. It becomes, however, seriously inconvenient and makes a real detriment to a system of efficiency when it is permitted to stand in the way of a wise administration of our resources. If our system of defense is to become efficient, if we are to secure full value for the dollars expended, this objection, whether based upon local greed or local pride, must be overruled. The wise-minded and patriotic citizen must bring influence to bear upon his Congressman so that he shall vote not by district, but imperially; that he shall recognize his duty as a member of the national government; and shall use his vote for the interests of the country as a whole.

The reports of the naval board show that the vessels now com-

prising our navy represent a good standard of construction and they are carrying a force of officers and of men which comprises as good material as is contained in any navy of the world. These reports also make clear that the navy is about two-thirds manned; and when the construction of a new vessel is completed, it is possible to put it into commission only by drafting its men from some of the vessels now in commission which vessels must then be laid up. The under-manning of the navy brings disproportioned labor upon the men on each ship, labor which may from time to time cause discontent and discouragement for the service. These reports also show that the present navy is not complete as a properly equipped or effective unit. Naval men know, and they are the only men who do know, just what is required to make a complete unit efficient for its purpose. They point out that the existence of so many dreadnaughts, in the old term "ships of the line," calls for a complement of so many cruisers. There is, in like manner, requirement for a definite proportion of colliers, supply-ships, aeroplanes, submarines. If the people should decide, or at least if Congress, claiming to speak in behalf of the people, should decide, that, under our present policy, the navy ought not to be increased, there is no excuse for deciding at the same time that the navy for which we are now making appropriation should not be completed as a unit according to the reports of the naval board. And yet from year to year, these reports have been pigeonholed. The chairman of a Congressional committee who may be a citizen from some back Western state with no knowledge of ships, says jauntily, "The expenditure for the navy is sufficient; the navy is complete as it stands," or, assuming that he approves of some particular expenditure, he will support the recommendation so as to provide, for instance, for additional dreadnaughts, while refusing to approve provision for the colliers, the supply-ships, the aeroplanes, and the submarines which are essential to make the service of dreadnaughts effective. * * * *

The Congressman who is called upon to help to shape in committee the appropriations for army and navy is often ready to give larger consideration to the effect upon public opinion rather than to the needs of the service. For instance, the reports show that the value of the guns now placed in our coast defenses aggregates \$40,000,000. The average citizen learning that these guns have

been provided, or possibly if he is himself within reach, taking a look at the guns, is ready to convince himself that the government has taken the measures necessary for the protection of the coasts, and that the safety of his own home is secured. He forgets to inquire what provision, if any, has been made for the placing of trained artillerists behind the guns or for the accumulation of ammunition, much of which is of a character that cannot be manufactured hurriedly. The Congressman, representing a coast district, has satisfied the demand of his constituents, but he has done very little towards providing the defense required. The report of General Weaver, Chief of Coast Artillery, published in December, 1915, stated that 21,000 men are required to equip the defenses of the coast. One hundred and twenty-eight big guns have absolutely no men to work them; while the supply of ammunition for these guns would enable them to render service for the space of one hour!

An example of political stupidity in the failure to utilize capital (in the form of experience) that was available, is given in the management of our war with Spain in 1898. * * * * No one of the states concerned made use of the veteran experience that was in that year still within reach; and each of the great states whose troops were sent to the front must bear the disgrace for the blunders that resulted from ignorant political management of military requirements. The deaths per thousand from typhoid within the United States, when the troops were within reach of all the resources of the country, was greater for this little Spanish war of a few months than for the armies of the North during the whole four years of our Civil war. The men whose lives were sacrificed in the camps on Long Island and at Chickamauga and in Virginia (within twelve miles of the headquarters of the surgeon-general) because the camps had not been properly laid out and were not properly cared for, were simply murdered. These deaths were due to political ignorance and were a disgrace to the nation.

For the coast defenses, as for all the fighting forces of the country, naval and military, three policies are possible: we should accept the views of the pacifists, save the money of the country and refuse to make any appropriations whatsoever; the coast forts could be dismantled; the guns melted up; the vessels of the navy could be put on the scrap heap, and the soldiers of our little army returned to civil life; the nation could take the ground

that it would make no provision for the defense of its territories at home, or for the maintenance of obligations outside of its own territories. These obligations would, of necessity, be terminated. Such a course of action would at least be consistent, but it would also be cowardly and in the end futile. We may realize from past history, and from history that is now in progress, that abstinence from aggression, refusal to interfere with the affairs of the world, and assertion of righteous and unselfish purposes, would not protect the United States any more than it has protected China or Belgium from aggression and in the end from domination.

The second policy is that of partial or inadequate defense. This is the system that has in substance been followed by our country during the greater part of its history. As in the instances above cited, we use money, and a good deal of money, for the beginning of a defense system. Such expenditures can have no possible value excepting that of satisfying some phase of opinion at the time of some apparent emergency. We carry on a great series of army posts, three-fourths of which are antiquated and useless; we have the framework of an army without providing men enough even to do the national police duty over our great territory. We build expensive vessels and call the group a fleet without making provision for the final equipment, so that the fleet, whether smaller or larger, lacks complete efficiency. This kind of policy which, with a large amount of expenditure, produces no satisfactory results, is what the country has secured in leaving in the hands of civil authority not merely the decision as to national policy, but the determination of the details of the military and naval organization required to carry out such policy.

The third, and as the men of my group contend, the only reasonable, course of action for a nation such as our own, with wealth to protect, with policies to maintain, with obligations to fulfil, with ideals to uphold, is to make such organization of our national resources of men and of material as shall give fair assurance for the defense of our coasts, particularly of our great coast cities, and as shall place us in a position to fulfil in our international relations whatever obligations we have assumed. The nation should take the position that is taken by an honorable merchant who incurs no obligations for the fulfilment of which he has not resources in hand, or for which resources cannot be secured. The men who are

emphasizing the importance of a wise and consistent system of national defense are insisting that the political representatives of the country shall give heed to the counsel and to the specific recommendations submitted by the military and naval experts whose reports are based upon trained skill and long experience. These men have been educated by the country to do a specific service, and it is futile to train such men, to call upon them for the service, and then to permit their recommendations to be thrown to one side by civilians who do not understand the subject and will not take the pains to study it. * * * *

It is impossible to forecast what new perils may arise in the future. It is the hope of those who are working for peace (and those of us who are interested in organizing our defenses are all advocates of peace), that after the present war it should prove possible to bring about the federation of the states of the world, which has always been the dream, the ideal of the peace men.

Under such a federation, issues arising between the several states would be adjusted, not by war, but by the decisions of a world's court, sitting possibly at The Hague. These decisions will be enforced by a world's police, military and naval, made up of contingents contributed by the several states in proportion to their population, their wealth and their international relations, commercial and political. The contribution of the United States to such world's police must, in connection with its population of 100,000,000 and its great relative wealth, be large, much larger, in fact, than the forces that are now being recommended for new vessels, for the increase of the regular army, and for the constitution of a great reserve of trained citizens. * * * *

We must emphasize also with Congress the contention that a certain amount of training given to the young citizen when he is still receptive must largely increase the efficiency of that citizen. Under the recommendations of successive secretaries of war, approved by our National Security League, the service with the colors is to be diminished from seven years to two years. Any man of sufficient intelligence can, either as a soldier or as a citizen, secure adequate military training in two years, and if he has a little above the average intelligence and zeal, he can be discharged from the colors as an efficient soldier at the end of one year. The experts

are at one in the conclusion (a conclusion based largely upon the study of conditions in Germany and in France) that the efficiency for later work or for citizen service of any kind is so largely increased by intelligent military training that there would be not a loss but a net gain in the productive capacity of the country in allowing two years, or one year, for youngsters of from 18 to 20, or from 17 to 19 to be devoted to military training.

While the men in the ranks can be made effective with training of from one year to two years, the training of an officer is, of necessity, more exacting. It takes years to make a man fit for the responsibilities of an officer. If the reserve army of trained citizens is to come into existence, we must have officers competent to render the training required. It is the recommendation of the experts that provision be made for an annual examination of men for certificates as officers for the reserve army. Such examination should give us, in the course of a year or two, the 30,000 or 40,000 officers required. Such additional officers can be secured, first, by the enlargement of West Point, second by passing with the certificates or commissions the men appointed from the military institutions of the country and from the land grant colleges which under the conditions of their organization carry on military training; and, third, from outside groups, such as the Institute of Civil Engineers. The politicians can be made to understand that there is no more risk through the extension of this training of officers and of citizens generally, of bringing the country into a militaristic or aggressive form of mind than there was that the armies of veterans who made their triumphal march through Washington in 1865 would take possession of the government and would run the country for their own advantage.

I believe that the majority of our citizens today have no patience with the attempt to avoid risk of war for the purpose of saving expenditures and of maintaining (if possible) an ignoble peace. I believe that our citizens are ready now, as they have been in past generations, to do what is necessary to maintain our independence and to fulfil our obligations. I believe that Americans will hold that our obligations include not merely the fulfilment of our guarantees for the protection of American citizens from aggression, but the doing of our part in maintaining in the adjustment of the

world's issues the independence of the smaller states, in supporting the contest against aggression and world domination, in defending the right of the people to govern themselves and in upholding the ideals of representative government which have from the beginning been upheld by our Republic.